

(Washington, D.C.) - \$3 million to expand the University of Texas-San Antonio's (UTSA) groundbreaking cyber security initiative, "Dark Screen," has been included in a bill approved by the House Appropriations Committee this week. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez, who originally proposed the creation of the program in 2002, requested the additional funding to protect local government information networks. "While cyber-terrorism sounds like something straight out of a Hollywood blockbuster, the scary reality is that our cities' information network systems are not sufficiently prepared for a full-scale cyber-terrorist attack," said Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez. "Cyber-terrorism is a serious threat to our homeland security and we need to step up our efforts to help cities prepare for, recover from and protect their critical infrastructure in case of a cyber-attack. We must keep in mind that these cyber-security threats could come from anywhere in the world and could target virtually everyone from local government and law enforcement agencies to national security agencies. That is why the UTSA Dark Screen exercises are so critically important and why we need to give some serious consideration to developing an International Dark Screen exercise."

UTSA's Cyber Security Defend and Attack Exercises also known as "Dark Screen" exercises were originally proposed in 2002 by Congressman Rodriguez, who served the House Armed Services Committee at the time. UTSA's Center for Infrastructure Assurance and Security (CIAS) has successfully run a series of Dark Screen cyber-terrorism exercises in select locations across the country, testing and recommending actions to strengthen the city's ability to detect and respond to a cyber-terrorism attack. Additionally, UTSA works closely with first responders of cities and municipalities to enhance their incident response capabilities in the event of a criminal, terrorist attack or natural disaster. Dark Screen exercises have been conducted in a limited number of cities, and in 2002-2003, San Antonio was the first city in the U.S. to conduct a cyber-security exercise.

Dark Screen funds included in the full Defense Appropriations bill must still be approved by the full House and will then proceed through a Conference Committee with the Senate, before it can be sent to the President.

Congressman Rodriguez is a Member of the House Appropriations Committee and serves on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security.